DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 322 631 EA 022 156

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TITLE Some Weaknesses in Education Administration and Some Plans for Improvement: A Point of View (1989).
PUB DATE Apr 90
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, April 16-20, 1990).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; Administrators; *Educational Administration; *Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Females; Models; Professional Development; Research and Development; Research Design; Researchers; Research Problems; Research Utilization; School Demography; Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

A review of recent literature and commission reports identifies persistent problems in two areas of educational administration: research and preparation programs. The two problems are linked in that they are often supervised by faculty who direct but do not themselves perform research. Two areas of research needs are the poor research skills of the faculty and poor research designs. The recommendation is made for the development of an educational administration model, which might be similar to those in other fields, particularly economics, to develop a database, generate a focus for research, and provide a research evaluation tool. An extensive bibliography and tables of criticisms and remedies for educational administration and faculty-oriented research improvement procedures are included. (LMI)

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# Some Weaknesses in Education Administration and Some Plans for Improvement: A Point of View (1989)

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## Abstract

Through a review of recent literature and commission reports, the author identifies persistent problems in two areas: research and preparation programs in education administration. The author suggests that these two problem areas are closely linked, often due to a research focus on inconsequential problems conducted under the supervision of professors who direct research but don't, themselves, do research. Two areas of research needs are mentioned as examples of increasing importance for policy and practitioners. As one way to build and develop a data base for education administration, to generate a focus for research and to produce a tool to guide improvements in education administration the author suggests that researchers attend to developing an education model. This model might be similar to those in other fields (e.g., Economics) and could guide improvements in the field and offer a base for assessing results.

# Some Weaknesses in Education Administration and Some Plans for Improvement: A Point of View (1989)[1]

## Introduction

Griffiths (1988) noted that a major study of education administration professors in 1973 found a perplexing complacency and a poor intellectual climate in education administration departments in the face of many problems of preparation programs (p. 20). This complacency still exists (McCarthy, et al., 1988) and compared to 1973 the field today seems 1) even less able to respond to the need for change and 2) even more determined to continue to rely on the past as a basis for the future. The two large areas of research and of preparation programs provide foci to assess strengths and weaknesses in the field over time.

Research in education administration has seldom received rave reviews either from educators or from scholars in other fields. Erickson (1979) spoke to the "State of the Art" of research in education administration and found the cup less than full -- even less than half full. Work was disjointed, amorphous and poorly focused (pp. 9-10).

> My task is to assess the "state of the art" in a research domain labeled "educational administration." But the phrase "educational administration" does not accurately indicate what area of inquiry I should assess. I have never encountered a satisfying discussion of the parameters of that field. In practical terms, the field consists of whatever scholars associated with university programs in "educational administration" consider relevant. It is, to say the least, amorphous.
>
> . . .Charters speaks, not of work precise, reproducible, and theoretically sound, but of "acres of disjointed, theoretically barren, non-cumulative, and downright shoddy studies that . . .[weave] no strands or themes." He laments "endless, witless administrations of the LBDQ, OCDQ, POS, ABC, and XYZ scales to haphazard collections of teachers and administrators." Analyzing student dissertations in departments of educational administration, Haller ends up not a great deal more ecstatic. McNamara demonstrates that many articles in Educational Administration Quarterly are distinguished by naive use of statistics (pp. 9-10).

Griffiths (1988) recalled that in their 1973 study, Campbell and Newell expressed concern over the dismal quantity and quality of research in education administration and that this condition has not appreciably improved (p. 21). Haller (1979) noted that doctoral students relied heavily on questionnaires. Haller's study found that fully 80% of doctoral studies were done with questionnaires; 53% used self-constructed instruments and 27% used published questionnaires. Boyan (1981) and others noted that most (80%) research in education administration was conducted by graduate students. Few education administration professors actually do research, but many supervise research. Since this bleak scenario does not seem ready to change, some extended effort is needed to improve research in education administration, and to

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strengthen processes for future research. One major emphasis must be to strengthen the research skills of the horde of professors who supervise but don't conduct research.

In reviewing research on education administration from 1967-1980, Bridges (1982) noted that "the more things change, the more they remain the same" (p. 24). Bridges' review notes over-used areas of research and identifies gaps in the research base, such as the impact of the superintendent as the Chief Executive Office (CEO), study of private school chiefs (see also Chubb and Moe, 1987, and Coleman and Hoffer, 1987) and the need for clarity and diversity in study of impacts or school outcomes. Bridges (1982) and others (e.g., Haller, 1979; Haller, 1989; Haller and Knapp, 1985; Knapp, 1982) have decried weak research designs, simplistic analyses and use of dubious questionnaires in research in this field. Other criticisms include: no programmatic research thrust, ad hoc efforts rather than building a knowledge base, and research of little practical utility. Bridges advocates integrative reviews and meta-analytic approaches to organizing education administration's research base. "If individual researchers are not using their own research as vehicles for building a knowledge base about school administrators, reviewers must assume the responsibility for integrating knowledge from a set of disparate studies" (p. 25).

The McCarthy et. al. (1988) study addressed professorial attention to research in several ways, including determining the "research orientation" (p. 63) of education administration faculty. The data do not support the idea that there is a strong research orientation among education administration faculty. Only 27 percent of the McCarthy et. al. (1988) sample reported spending as much as 20 percent of their time on research and scholarly writing (p. 60). Some subgroups within the sample (e.g., women at 42 percent) exceeded the mean. Only 24 percent of the sample reported more than 10 professional articles, papers or chapters written or co-authored in the past 5 years (p. 62), and this does not indicate the research output, for certainly some of the product will be scholarly but not research. Indeed, the percentage of respondents reporting "outside funding or released time for research declined between the 1972 (23%) and 1986 (19%) surveys" (p. 63). The inattention to research marches to the cadence of such things as journals read, major conferences attended or organizations joined by faculty, presumably to keep up to date on research. The practitioner-oriented Phi Delta Kappan was the most popular journal of the professors, and when categorizing professor-preference reading into research-oriented or practitioner-oriented, "fewer than one fourth of the 1986 respondents indicated that a research journal was the most important periodical that they read regularly" (p. 65). This preference for The Kappan is not surprizing when 28 percent of the respondents listed "Phi Delta Kappa among their three most important professional associations, compared to 27% who listed AERA among their three most important affiliations" (p. 76).

These 1986 data (McCarthy, et al., 1988) support the picture that research is not a major concern of large numbers of education administration faculty. There was some increase in research interest between the earlier Campbell and Newell (1972) report and the McCarthy, et. al. study -- perhaps occasioned by the increase in women in the professoriate (McCarthy, et al. , p. 167). McCarthy, et al. (1988) concluded: "While faculty in educational administration still spend less time in research (12%) than do

faculty in general (18% - Carnegie Foundation, 1984), scholarly productivity seems to be increasing" (p. 167). This optimistic picture may dim somewhat when we consider that most education administration faculties teach only graduate students. (83% of the McCarthy, et al. respondents taught undergraduates less than 10% of the time and 78% taught none: p. 71.) Care must also be taken to separate research from scholarly, but non-research, writing when considering 1) development of a strong knowledge base, and 2) refinements in methods of inquiry pertinent to the field. Data still indicate that many more of the faculties are directing student research than conducting their own research agendas. Overall, 56 percent of the faculties chaired doctoral research -- 72 percent at doctoral-degree granting institutions -- and 50 percent chaired master's committees (McCarthy, et al., pp. 72-74). If professors don't keep their research skills finely honed, student research stands to suffer.

On the optimistic side, the picture just drawn suggests that the field may not have far to go to reassert its strong practitioner ties, or to develop a "professional" model as recommended by recent commissions and articles. In fact, one marvels at the resistance to adopt this stance formally and quickly, for it seems close at hand. Might the idea of focused research on practice generate some of the resistance, as this call for research may be seen as one more underscoring of faculty inattention to a knowledge base? If professors are neither engaged in the practice of administration nor the practice of generating of new knowledge, what will they profess of value to the field?

Practitioners believe that preparation programs have lost touch with the requirements of administering schools (Pitner, 1988; Lucas, et al., 1988; Thomson, 1989; Guthrie and Clifford, 1989). Communication between researchers and the field has suffered. To alleviate this problem, personnel in Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) might coordinate research with problems of the field through responsible involvement of practitioners and the use of multi-disciplinary teams to 1) refine problems of practice into research agendas, 2) help define rigorous methodology and design, 3) assist in analysis, 4) provide ideas about how research results relate to specific disciplines and other fields, 5) identify effective development steps and dissemination strategies for research results, and 6) assist with evaluation of new processes and programs. But a discussion of research in education administration necessarily intersects with concern for preparation programs in the field.

Preparation programs for education leaders have been criticized (e.g., NCEEA, 1987; Pitner, 1982 and 1988; Peterson and Finn, 1985: Achilles, 1984a, 1984b, 1988, etc.). According to Griffiths (1988) "Most programs for training school administrators range in quality from embarrassing to disastrous" (p. 6). There is considerable emphasis for change in how we prepare school administrators. Some have suggested different conceptualizations of and approaches to preparation programs (e.g., Griffiths, et al., 1988; NCEEA, 1987; Duke, 1986 and 1988; Murphy and Hallinger, 1987; Achilles, 1988; Achilles and Hughes, 1972). The NCEEA recommended a "professional" model for preparing education administrators, including cooperation with "the field." Although this change may be overdue, systematic data supporting specifics of the need for change, are ephemeral at best; there are few studies of preparation program quality or efficacy.

Education administration has been with us for some time. Culbertson (1988, p. 5) notes that Payne taught the first class in school management in 1881-82 at the University of Michigan. Yet, not until 1988 has there been a serious attempt to codify the "knowledge base," into the Handbook of Educational Administration (Boyan, 1988). Indeed, the 1989 University Council on Educational Administration (UCEA) convention centered upon the knowledge base in education administration. It is as if education administration's clutch is slipping. Preparation programs provide a case for study. How substantively different are the NCEEA's (1987) or National Policy Board's (1989) recommendations from 1) some 1970's ideas which grew from the Education Professions Development Act, or 2) some 1960's ideas (Culbertson, et al., 1969), or 3) the Ford Foundation's Inter-University Project II, or even 4) major preparation ideas of the 1950's (The Kellogg-sponsored CPEA at seven major institutions)? Would this slippage occur if there were an adequate data base to support changes -- if education administration's act were in gear? (Achilles, 1989)

Changes in research and in preparation programs will require an important cooperative role between/among various "actors" in the web of education. The study of problems of practice should help refine preparation programs. Some excellent schools show that there can be school excellence. These schools should be studied to determine how administrators implement school improvement ideas. This argues for understanding how change occurs and becomes part of the school community, and for attention in preparation programs to change and communication processes and skills.

Little is known about how those in schools organize and use available information, or how this information and decisions based upon it influence teaching and learning. If we are to understand this process, and then manipulate selected variables, we should learn more about what leads to school outcomes (teaching and learning). Is an emphasis on this type of content commonly found in preparation programs?

The field should mount a longitudinal thrust to examine preparation of education leaders. This thrust should involve serious collection and use of data. If we do not seriously study preparation programs and develop a data base, the next round of criticism of preparation will find education administration as unprepared to respond appropriately as did the 1980's challenges. A knowledge base is essential.

The knowledge base in education and education administration has been cussed, discussed and derided. Demerell (1985) called the absence of a body of its own knowledge "Education's Smoking Gun." The general low estate of eduction departments and faculties on major campuses seems to derive, at least in part, from educators' inability to define their own body of knowledge and specific methods of inquiry (Judge, 1982; Guthrie and Clifford, 1989). Derek Bok, President of Harvard, spoke to education's lack of a knowledge base of its own. To the extent that it is part of education, Bok's (1987) comments include education administration: "Because they have neither a strong profession nor a distinctive body of knowledge to impart, education faculties have no firm anchor for their programs or curricula. Instead, external forces push them first in one direction, and then in another" (p. 46, emphasis added).

Culbertson (1988) hinted at education's lack of a substantive data base in his Cocking lecture. He spoke of education administration's habit of borrowing from others:

> A hundred years after Harris' and Payne's pronouncements the practice of borrowing seems well established. . . . First, borrowed concepts tend to enter textbooks before they are adequately tested in school systems. The result is that such concepts may be used indefinitely in training programs even though their actual relations to school management and leadership practices remain unknown (pp. 19-20)

Much of what passes for "research" in education administration consists of repeating and reporting what others have said (the current material included!), and not of presenting research results and building these upon important advances in research. A careful check of the citations in articles -- some are scholarly -- often shows that the materials cited are, themselves, not research, but are reports of other's ideas, critiques, syntheses, and informed opinion. The continuous citing of non-research eventually, somehow, leads to the acceptance of the oft-cited piece as "data."

The practice of "borrowing," the absence of a firm data base, problems inherent in preparation programs -- and especially problems in providing strong research emphases -- all seem directly or tangentially related to concerns with research in the field. Inattention to problem-finding (clear definition of problems) remains a major issue connected both to research and preparation (Getzels, 1979). Without clear and important problems carefully defined, education administration research will continue to be "disjointed, theoretically barren, non-cumulative and downright shoddy. . ." (Erickson, 1979; p. 10). Without good research, the field will continue to be inconsequential in improving education.

Table 1 summarizes major criticisms of research in education administration. Table 1 also briefly lists some activities and structures that might help avoid more criticism or even provide solutions to problems which current criticisms have identified. Table 1 has a general focus.

Table 1 About Here

Table 2 data focus on faculty as part of the solution to research problems. Table 2 includes some suggestions to improve research in education administration. The ideas in Table 2 are under broad categories of current faculty, future faculty, research focus, and research design ideas.

Table 2 About Here

Gender issues in administration demand attention. Griffiths (1988) noted: "Enrollment of women in educational administration programs nation-wide is approaching 50 percent. The next job is to get them appointed to principalships and

superintendencies. The easiest, quickest, and surest way to improve the quality of educational administration is to appoint more women" (p. 13). Duke (1986) noted: "Lightfoot (1983) comments on masculine and feminine qualities of leadership among high school principals. She notes that a feminine model of leadership finds leaders expressing a need for partnership and nurturance. Furthermore, relationships and affiliations come to be regarded as central dimensions of the exercise of power" (p. 17). The impressive work of Shakeshaft (1987, 1988), and research by McCarthy, et al. (1988) and Pounder (1988, 1989) show the importance of understanding the gender implications for education leadership. If school boards hire prepared female administrators, what changes can we expect in how schools are administered? As women move into the professoriate, what changes will occur there? McCarthy, et al. (1988) noted (p. 95):

> As female representation increases, greater diversity within the educational administration professoriate can be expected. The nature of preparation programs and administrative practice should change in several ways. Women are more research-oriented, less satisfied with the status quo, more sensitive to the interpersonal dimensions of the work environment, and more likely to form collegial networks beyond their own universities. After reviewing the literature on effective learning environments and gender differences, Shakeshaft (1987) concluded:
>
> > Women [have] clear educational goals, supported by a value system which stresses service, caring, and relationships. Women are focused upon instructional and educational issues. . . . [Their] communication and decision making styles stress cooperation and help to facilitate a translation of their educational visions into actions. Women monitor and intervene more than men, they evaluate student progress more often, and . . .[they] demonstrate, more often than men, the kinds of behavior that promote achievement and learning as well as high morale and commitment. . . (p. 200).

Demographics pose interesting education leadership issues (Hodgkinson, 1985, 1986, 1987). Many schools in the near future will be populated primarily by non-Anglos. Teen pregnancy is increasing. AIDS is an epidemic. Guns and gangs threaten schooling as most school people have known it. What do these issues mean for administration of schools? What will administrators need to know to work effectively in "majority minority" schools to obtain desired pupil outcomes?

A Couple Suggestions for Improvement

A common definition may be needed. An interesting, but unproductive and long-standing debate has raged about relative merits of leadership and management. (The 1988 Request for Proposals for the Federal R&D Center competition continued to pursue this barren issue.) Is the principal a leader or a manager? Murphy, Hallinger and Mitman (1983) count among the research problems in education leadership 1) misconceptions about management and 2) misconceptions about leadership. Management and leadership are often viewed as extremes of one continuum. "New effectiveness activities are leadership, while unpopular practices are sorted into the management bin" (p. 299). A more useful concept may be to view administration as involving both

management and leadership. The craft of the artful blending of management and leadership may be the science that helps an administrator succeed within a given context. Courses in management and leadership are part of administration preparation.

So, with all of these deficits, what should education administration folks do? Certainly a piecemeal approach will wear out everyone. When all else slows down or fails, a model is the answer.

Needed -- An Education Model. A monumental and continuing task faces scholars and practitioners of education administration. To advance the administration of education, the 1990's should embrace substantial work on the development of an education model to provide guidance in education administration research and development (R&D).

The predictable and cyclical surge of calls for education reforms (no doubt that education will be blamed for ethics problems in Congress and the Savings and Loan failure!)[2] should alert educators either to follow meekly the demands of education's critics or to demonstrate systematically why and how education is different from society's other primary institutions. It is tempting to follow blindly the procedures used by other sectors of society, such as business administration. Yet, this may be harmful in the long run.

Education's critics often suggest that educators adopt or adapt practices and models from other social institutions. Although their practices and principles may adjust to education's needs, administration in other institutions is different from administration of schools in terms of purpose, context and outcomes, success measures, etc. For example, administration of education involves professionals who work primarily in the public sector with "raw material" over which they have little quality control. Outcome measures of industry are products and profits while education's are knowledge, values, and attitudes. (If the stock market were an indicator of business success -- as student test scores have become an indicator for education -- the October, 1987 decline would suggest that administration in other sectors is not without some problems.) Although purposes and outcome measures are different, nevertheless, other institutions may have important concepts that can be applied effectively in the administration of schools. Some research might determine if and how practices from other institutions can contribute to improved education outcomes.

For years educators have tried, usually vainly, to mimic other models or to jury-rig education conceptually from spare parts left over from other models, for example: the medical model, or the factory or work model. Each model may have contributed to education. Each has also caused problems because of Procrustean attempts to fit education snugly into models portraying other social institutions. Although education and education administration are concerned with application of concepts from many fields (e.g., learning theory, physiology and growth, motivation, change, communication), education still requires its own model to accommodate education's idiosyncratic aspects. Educators need to work from within education to develop their own agendas for improvement. One way for educators to respond positively to calls for reform is for

educators to develop an education model that will help them plan and guide their own reform movements, and track their own R&D agendas.

Educators face complex challenges and issues. Many public funds go to support education, so there is constant and legitimate clamor for close scrutiny of educators' acts and for attention to performance (accountability). Education administrators somehow must report on gains and success, but usually they are limited to using standardized measures which require that one half of education's "products" will be below average. (It is only minor consolation that one half of anything, even Mercedes or Xerox machines, are below average!) If the usual measurement steps are used, norms move up frequently, assuring that progress is always reported as "one half of the pupils are below average." If norms are static for awhile, education's successes create a "Lake Wobegone Effect" where all of the kids are above average (Cannell, 1987). Does education -- with the current call for cooperative learning -- want or need a model like the major-league baseball standings where one "team's" gain requires another "team's" equivalent loss? Where is a model that lets educators discuss progress or success meaningfully, but still use recognized measures to guide education improvements? Slavin (1989) noted that:

> One major factor inhibiting systematic progress in education is the lack of agreement about what constitutes progress and what constitutes adequate evidence to support action. Other fields have clear indicators of progress -- such as yield per acre, mortality per 1000 patients. . . (p. 753)

Where are models to help education's administrators understand the probable results of reducing class size in a specific grade, for a particular subject, taught by method A (or B, or C, etc.), for pupils of known characteristics (race, sex, age, IQ, etc.)? Where is the model to help education's administrators determine education's outcomes today in relation to 1958? Is there an education "constant dollar," or Dow Jones Average, or GNP? Where is a model that will free educators to think about what will be -- and to test ideas against realities that don't yet exist? How can educators test their ideas, strategies, and hunches against what <u>may</u> come, for surely education will face massive changes?

An education model may need to borrow from other models, but it must directly address <u>education issues</u>. An education model, reflecting education's inherent optimism, should be positively oriented and optimistic. (How do good schools work? How should they work?) The education model must accommodate diverse philosophic bases and sets of assumptions that permeate the pluralistic society which education serves. A model so conceived will provide one conceptual framework to guide the development of pertinent theories for education. The model will generate new ways for assessing education outcomes and new concepts to advance education; it will allow educators to dream dreams and test those dreams against the aspirations and expectations of others.

The construction of a conceptually sound <u>education model</u> capable of helping educators describe, assess, develop and predict key education variables is a fruitful challenge for those who profess concerns about the state of education and its relationship to the "rising

tide of mediocrity." Appropriately developed and applied, an education model should help educators in several ways. For example, an education model should help educators know how state-of-the-art concepts and methods from other fields and disciplines might influence important problems in education.

When educators recognize that education will -- indeed, must -- be greatly different in the future, they can be helped by some "infernal machine" that will crank out new scenarios. As economists build and test economic models, so should educators build and refine education models. What if education changes dramatically? What, for example, will happen when the fourth dimension -- time -- drastically reshapes education of the future? Suppose ....? What if.....? Without an accurate model, there will be no place to test out new and wild ideas. And we need those ideas very badly. Now.

Conclusion

As the report of the NCEEA and numerous other reports have noted, there are many places where a reformer might start to reform education administration. There is an "opportunity smorgasbord." The reformer is confronted with many delightful problems, issues and criticisms which deserve attention. The field, collectively, should ferret out the worst criticisms and work on them. The luxury of reinventing the same "innovation" every few years must cease as education administration's only response to challenges and criticisms. Perhaps the worst criticism is "the more things change, the more they remain the same."

Two concurrent steps will help education administration strengthen its claim to importance. One step relates to research and inquiry. Educators should work seriously on ways to improve research on education and administration of education and to develop a strong, useful knowledge base. This step will be part of the pervasive change in preparation programs for education administrators that is currently underway. The second step is to think seriously enough about education to develop an education model. The model will serve many purposes in improving education; some ideas are included in this article, but there are many more. Perhaps more attention to inquiry, improved preparation, a heuristic model and a substantial knowledge base will together help blunt Bridges' (1982) comment that "the more things change, the more they stay the same" (p. 24).

## Footnotes

[1]An early draft of portions of this material was included in the Southern Regional Consortium of Colleges of Education (SRCCE) Proposal for a Federal R&D Center for Educational Leadership, 1988.

[2]The projected "bailout" for the S&L rescue would fund the federal government's share for education for decades. Remember that while saving business once more!

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TABLE 1
Criticisms and Concerns about Research in Education Administration and Suggested Steps to Avoid or Remedy Them

| Criticisms/Concerns about Research in Ed. Admin. | Steps to Avoid or Remedy Criticisms |
|---|---|
| Research has little practical utility; Inattention to problems of schools; Practitioners don't use research results (such as they are). | "Problems of Practice" focus; Use of results by preparation programs personnel; Practitioner involvement; Improved R&D training. |
| Poor research designs, over-use of questionnaires, lack of Research & Development (R&D) focus. | Experienced Principal Investigators (PIs) could provide seminars for other faculty on varied research methods; More full-time "apprenticeships." |
| Many faculty have poor research skills; Few professors actually do research. | Training; Skilled PIs; Use student/faculty teams to conduct studies. |
| Research is ad hoc with little attention to integration of results into theory or into a model to advance later research; Poor concepts of research on administration (vs. on administrators, etc). The systematic data base for education administration is not substantial. | Design (a priori) studies amenable to comparisons and meta-analytic approaches; Research emphases can be developed in accord with organizing frameworks. Coordinated efforts (e.g. "Leadership Contexts/Education Outcomes" focus. Professors add to the database with series of studies. |
| Research lacks vision and neglects impending problems and concerns. Good ideas, important problems and substantial research are not the norm. | Focus on gender, demographics, and new or future emphases. Employ practitioner involvement to find problems (Problems of practice). |
| Preparation programs are not adequate: poor criteria, standards, content, etc. Little concentrated research emphasis in preparation programs. | Build one major research focus on preparation programs, including models -- model.building, pilot-test and analysis of models, research of results. |
| Insularity. Inattention to advances in other fields; inattention to findings in other education administration studies. | Involve representatives of other disciplines. Professors should read in the research journals. |

Table 2
Some Faculty-Oriented Procedures to Improve Research in Education Administration (EA) and Generate Useful Data to Build a Data Base

| | |
|---|---|
| Current Faculty | As research notes, few faculty do research, but many supervise it. Rather than becoming endlessly mired in "philosophic" issues, faculty should receive training in research methods appropriate for research in EA and do some research. Faculty might work as teams on important problems. Those who don't do research should not supervise it. |
| Future Faculty | Future faculty often work (i.e., get degrees) with current faculty who don't do research. This should end in time (see Current Faculty), but preparation programs should require more emphasis on research, not just on statistics. What is research or inquiry? Why do research? How? Courses on research should not be taught by those not doing research. Future faculty should be part of student/faculty teams conducting on-going research during preparation. Future faculty should develop several research papers, etc. before doing their dissertations. Research and evaluation activities are important in establishing a spirit of inquiry. |
| Research Focus | Research in EA should focus substantially on practice -- on students, teachers, contexts, content, and administrators. Research should be done on site (reduce the mail-out questionnaire), using several methods of inquiry. Solving specific problems of practice will provide evidence that should lead to generalizations and then to the testing of the generalizations. Research which moves from practice to theory should be as valued as research which moves from theory to practice. |
| Research Design Ideas | Education administrators need to know not only that something happens (often the message of tests of significance) but what happens and how it happens. Perhaps one day we'll become expert enough to show why something happens. Replicating studies is useful if there are ways to aggregate the results to advance knowledge. Meta-analytic processes could be strengthened if some studies of important issues used the same or similar designs, methods and analyses from the outset. Research teams might design such studies in advance so the results will be moderately comparable. This step should allow more sensible comparisons of findings of similar studies. (The flip side is a lack of diversity.) |